READING-ORIENTED INTERNET-ASSISTED TEACHING OF L3 (SPANISH) ON THE BASIS OF L2 (ENGLISH)

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Abstract

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This article discusses the development of a practical approach to Internet-assisted teaching of Spanish as L3 to students at a tertiary educational institution majoring in English (L2). The approach is distinguished by (1) a reading orientation when the Internet is primarily (though not exclusively) used as a source of materials for students to read with the sole purpose of engaging in skill-acquisition learning activities and tasks and (2) the use of English language Internet resources to help Ukrainian/Russian-speaking (L1) students learn Spanish as their second, after English, foreign language (L3). The impact of the developed approach on students' progress is analyzed and discussed.

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Introduction

The Internet has already become a well-established tool for learning second and foreign languages, especially ESL/EFL. The guidelines for using it are quite thoroughly developed (e.g., Warschauer & Whittaker, 1997). In fact, it has considerably changed the very concept of foreign/second language learning. Concerning the use of computers in language learning, Warschauer (1998) states that "we do not have old language learning plus the computer, but we have a different language learning" (p. 760). The same can be said with confidence about the use of the Internet, especially when students work independently on their language-learning tasks. Indeed, the nature of the Internet's influence on language learning, making it "a different language learning," is closely tied to the enormity and practical inexhaustibility of resources it provides to language learners and to the different target language communication sources it supports such as e-mails, Internet chats and forums, and video conferencing.

Despite the enormity of opportunities the Internet offers language learners, it has two important limitations. First, though many different resources can be found on the Internet (including an ever increasing number of audio and video materials), the majority of them are print materials. As a result, the development of target language reading skills is directly impacted while the development of speaking, listening, and writing skills is less direct. Second, the overwhelming majority of the available Internet resources is English driven. As such, it is primarily the ESL/EFL learner who can benefit most directly from the vast opportunities offered by the Internet.

Given the above limitations, the purpose of the pilot study reported here was to turn those limitations into advantages and to use them to benefit our Ukrainian/Russian-speaking (L1) students who were learning Spanish as their L3 while majoring in English as their L2. The other purpose was to help students gain effective Internet skills to be used in their language learning activities.

Context

The study discussed in this article was a prolonged pilot study. (An experimental research study is planned in the near future.) The goal was to develop a practical approach for reading-oriented and Internet-assisted teaching of L3 (Spanish) on the basis of L2 (English). A secondary goal was to determine the effectiveness of utilizing the approach developed. Accordingly, the major focus of the study was on how to make:

1. Best use of authentic reading materials provided by the Internet to improve the development of learners' overall communication skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) in Spanish as their L3.

2. Profitable use of students' L2 (English) and mine the wealth of the English Internet resources to improve the learning of Spanish as L3, particularly the development of students' general skills in using the Internet for language studies.

These two questions are of considerable interest in this study because there is very little, if any, research devoted to the methodology of teaching and learning Spanish as L3 where the issue of using the Internet for such a purpose is analyzed. Additionally, to date, no study has considered students' L2 (English) as a potential source for learning Spanish (L3) by way of using Internet resources and sites designed for native speakers of English, including those sites that are designed for native speakers of English learning Spanish as their L2.

When discussing the practical interest of the two questions above, it should be noted that nowadays, students the world over have already more or less acquired English as their L2 before beginning to learn Spanish as their L3. The frequency of encountering such a situation is due to the fact that Spanish, though naturally not as popular as English, is, nonetheless, one of the most popular foreign languages studied (i.e., outside the countries where Spanish is used as L1). Consequently, research that can improve the simultaneous learning of both languages is of great practical significance. This is particularly beneficial in using the Internet in language studies, as the Internet is known to be one of the most effective means of intensifying language learning in that it ensures better real-world practice in communication. In our case, it involves practicing Spanish (L3), and to a certain degree English (L2) in connection with Spanish, thus improving students' overall communication skills in both languages.

The study discussed in this paper was held at Dnipropetrovsk University of Economics and Law in Ukraine. Only those students whose major was English and who studied at the Department of International Communication were allowed to participate in the study. The principal orientation at the Department of International Communication within international business communication is to train proficient translators and interpreters in two foreign languages. The mother tongue of all students is either Ukrainian or Russian (L1) while their principal foreign language being learned (L2 – major) is English. These students begin the study of English at the pre-intermediate/intermediate level during their first year of university studies and continue to study English for the next five years.

Moreover, students at the Department of International Communication are expected to choose freely their second mandatory foreign language (L3 – the second major). Three language options are available to them: German, Spanish, or French. The course in L3 starts in the second semester of the first year of study and lasts until the last semester of the fifth year of study. The class hours per week vary from eight to four. As already noted above, only those students who had chosen Spanish as their L3 participated in the pilot study reported here.

There were two groups (Group A and Group B) who in the 2005/2006 academic year participated in the pilot study:

- Group A was comprised of 11 students between the ages of 19 and 20 (one male and ten females) who were in their third year at the university during the 2005/2006 academic year. Beginning with the second semester of the 2003/2004 academic year, these 11 students had Internet-assisted studies of Spanish for five semesters.

- Group B was comprised of 7 students between the ages of 20 and 22 (one male and six females) who during the 2005/2006 academic year were in their fourth year at the university. Beginning with the second semester of the 2002/2003 academic year, these 7 students had Internet-assisted studies of Spanish for seven semesters.

In both groups, all 18 students had never learned Spanish before starting their studies at the university.

Rationale

As already noted, we could find no relevant data in professional literature on any established method of Internet-assisted teaching/learning of Spanish as L3 with English being the students' L2. In developing our own approach, we were able to consider only established *general* approaches to Internet-assisted language teaching/learning and to use them only as points of reference.

The first point of reference involved the principal ways of using Internet in language learning (as described by Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000), including:

- Communication and collaborative projects with students in a single classroom or across classrooms in different parts of the world;

- Student research on the Internet;

- Publishing students' work on the World Wide Web.

According to the authors of this study, using the Internet in language learning ensures achieving the goals of active and creative mastery of the language being learned. To be a success, the Internet-assisted teaching should be project-based and student-centered.

The second point of reference follows from the above. Specifically, Internet-assisted learning of Spanish as L3 should be primarily oriented at students' autonomous elaboration of different learning projects using the Internet as a source of materials for those projects and as a means of communication and collaboration with other people (in the same class or across the world). The results of such project work can either be published on the World Wide Web

or simply discussed in class, depending on the teaching/learning circumstances and the communicative goals pursued.

The third point of reference centers on the variety of media through which the Internet provides its limitless resources. The Internet allows for not only reading information that was searched, but also the ability to hear it, visual graphics, pictures, moving images, and manipulatives. A good example of this is the combination of video with aural information technology as exemplified in computer-based streaming audio and video sources. Through such media sources, the target language environment is virtually transported into the classroom (e.g., Brett, 2000; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997). But despite the multi-media nature of the Internet, it bears repeating that the majority of the Internet resources are in the form of print texts. As a result, students' research on the Internet will inevitably be mostly reading-oriented. The advantage of computer-assisted reading instruction accelerates the development of reading skills thanks to learners receiving individualized instructions, immediate feedback, and opportunities to pace their reading, and having relatively easy access to other resources available online (Singhal, 2005). No other communication skill can benefit from computer-assisted instruction as much as reading. That is why it is quite reasonable to make Internet-assisted learning of Spanish as L3 mostly *reading-oriented* precisely because it involves students conducting research on the Internet to accomplish the specific goals of their projects.

Conversely, reading-oriented Internet-assisted instruction should make use of the possibilities offered by the Internet as regards the development of the other communication skills (writing, speaking, and listening). First of all, communicative and collaborative projects carried out via the Internet involve writing as the basic means of communication and, generally speaking, use of the computer as a language-learning tool greatly contributes to the development of target language writing skills (Slaouti, 2000). Second, writing, while making use of the Internet, affords ample opportunities for such targeted development. Third, writing skills should not only be developed when students communicate in writing via the Internet. Thus argued, a reading-based Internet search for resources to carry out various learning projects may (and must) be accompanied with writing tasks that actually make use of the resources found on the Internet.

Finally, the same argument also holds true for the development of oral skills via the Internet (see Motteram, 2000). In our pilot study, the focus was on speaking and listening tasks completed on the basis of resources found (and read) in the process of conducting Internet searches. A good illustration of this are the oral presentations students made after finding and reading the information and materials for such presentations on the Internet. By design, these individual presentations are expected to be listened to and discussed by all students in the group during class time. Such an approach does not suggest the exclusion of Internet resources linked to the development of the target language speaking and listening skills. On the contrary, their use is highly recommended. For the purposes of our study, however, we focused mainly on students' speaking and listening in class using the resources found and read on the Internet. All resources were used whenever possible as springboards for furthering students' development of oral production and reception.

Thus far, we have argued for an integrated skills approach (Oxford, 2001) while highlighting the importance of reading among the other communication skills when implementing the Internet-assisted instruction of Spanish as L3. This was the *fourth point of reference* for the study.

The fifth point of reference concerns the development of students' cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills (Thorne & Thorne, 2000). We hold such development as imperative, especially when target language learning takes place outside the cultural community (as it was in our case). In this context, it must be stated that the Internet

affords students unprecedented opportunities to learn and expand their cultural repertoire. As such, it offers what is perhaps the best medium for the development of such cultural skills.

When introducing the Internet into learning Spanish as L3, it bears repeating that our students were already at the intermediate level of language proficiency in English when they began their study of Spanish. As a result, students were able to take full advantage of their English knowledge as they attempted to engage in their Spanish-learning activities. For instance, students could use American or British sites for learners of Spanish or search Internet resources in English in order to find the requisite materials for writing their essays or making presentations in Spanish. As such, we were able to accomplish to a degree the integration of learning two foreign languages. This practice proved highly beneficial in that it extended the range of Internet resources used while offering additional opportunities for reading practice in English. *This was the sixth point of reference.*

The seventh and final point of reference in developing the approach explicated here deals with the importance of following the 'dual immersion' procedure, that is to say, the simultaneous learning of a target language and technology, and more specifically, the technique of using computers in general and the Internet in particular (Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000). The dual immersion was especially relevant in the conditions under discussion because a great many of our students were not proficient in the use of computers at the beginning of their university studies. Not surprisingly, a number of explanations and special training sessions such as the employment of a gradual approach to introducing more complex learning tasks involving the Internet were required (i.e., starting with simpler tasks in the first year, giving more time for work on the Internet at the beginning, and the like).

In sum, it may be argued that the approach of Internet-assisted instruction for teaching Spanish as L3 to students of English as L2 was developed along the following seven guidelines:

1. Students' learning efforts must be directed at autonomous elaboration of different learning projects in Spanish.

2. Students are to use the Internet primarily as a source of materials for completing their projects and as a means of communication and collaboration with other people (e.g., their peers/colleagues of the same classroom or across the world) while carrying out their learning projects.

3. The use of the Internet by learners must be reading-oriented.

4. The integrated skills approach should be encouraged so that it contributes to the development of all communication skills, especially the development of reading skills.

5. Students' Internet-based work must be aimed at developing learners' cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills.

6. A certain degree of integration in learning two foreign languages (Spanish as L3 and English as L2) is required.

7. "Dual immersion" procedure is highly recommended.

Method/Procedures

The approach developed can best be discussed by describing the procedures of work involving the Internet at different stages (and in different semesters) of learning Spanish.

The beginner stage (the second semester of the first year of study and the first semester of the second year of study – two semesters). The greater part of the classroom work is done in a computer laboratory under the teacher's guidance.

- Students receive basic instruction in using the Internet and open their own mailboxes at one of the Internet sites in Spanish (like http://es.yahoo.com/ – Spain, http://ar.yahoo.com/ – Argentina, http://mx.yahoo.com/ – Mexico, http://espanol.yahoo.com/ – USA in Spanish).

- "Student-teacher," "teacher-student" e-mail correspondence begins with the teacher sending students messages with specific recommendations concerning their work with Internet resources, depending on learners' individual interests and preferences.

- Students subscribe to newsletters *A Word per Day* (*La palabra del día* – http://www.elcastellano.org), *A Phrase per Day* (*Frase del día* – http://www.proverbia.net), and *Today's Phrase (Frase de hoy* – http://www.frasedehoy.com/index.php), as well as *Palabradia – Learn a Spanish word every day* (http://mail.spanishlanguage.co.uk/mailman/listinfo/palabradia spanishlanguage.co.uk), and discuss those materials that they enjoyed/preferred in class.

- Students are introduced to online dictionaries, both monolingual and bilingual (Spanish-English, English-Spanish), including the dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* (http://www.rae.es/), the dictionaries of synonyms and antonyms (http://tradu.scig.uniovi.es/sinon.html), and others (for instance, the etymological dictionary *Origen de las palabras* http://www.etimologias.dechile.net/, *ABC Iberoamericano* – http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/misc/newsid_4002000/4002957.stm, *Regionalismos de la Lengua Española* – http://www.hispanicus.com/drle/).

- Students start reading simplified and adapted texts at the portals of the Foreign Ministry of Spain, the Embassies of Spain in the USA (http://www.sgci.mec.es/usa/) and the UK (*Tecla: Texts for Learners and Teachers of Spanish* – http://www.sgci.mec.es/uk/Pub/tecla.html), as well as at the portal of the Institute of Cervantes (http://www.cvc.cervantes.es/portada.htm).

- Learners self-check their work using the portals of the *Don Quixote Institute* (http://www.donquijote.org/) and different learning sites like *Parlo* (http://www.parlo.com/es/learn/diagnostic/diagtest.asp) and a number of others (for instance, http://ave.cervantes.es/#prueba; http://www.spanishlanguage.co.uk/previotest.htm).

- Students work independently (out-of-class) with the resources found in the English-language sites for learners of Spanish, such as *Business Spanish* (http://www.businessspanish.com/), *Spanish About* (http://spanish.about.com/), *Study Spanish* (http://www.studyspanish.com/index.htm), *Learn to Speak Spanish* (http://www.mytravelguide.com/travel-tools/learn-spanish-online/learn-spanish-online-for-free_objects.php), studying grammar, working on their vocabulary,

doing listening tasks, preparing themselves for discussing different topics in the classroom.

- Beginning with the first semester of the second year of study, students start reading simpler original (not adapted) texts at the portal of the Institute of Cervantes (http://www.cvc.cervantes.es/aula/lecturas/), as well as taking on-line quizzes.

The principal stage (from the second semester of the second year of study until the second semester of the third year of study – three semesters). Students work on the Internet independently with mandatory weekly reports on the work done and using the teacher's dedicated mailbox espaduep@yahoo.es. Each student group has its own folder in that mailbox where all learners' reports and messages are saved from the first until the last (fifth) year of study. Students' Internet-connected work includes:

- Tests and quizzes taken during class-time at the portal www.cvc.cervantes.es (the only Internet work that is regularly done in the classroom).

- Working independently on the Internet for individual and group cross-cultural projects (searching for materials, establishing contacts and exchanging e-mail messages with native speakers, participating in forums discussing relevant topics, etc.).

- Reading original authentic texts at such portals as *Ciudad Seva* (http://ciudadseva.com/) and *Letras Perdidas* (http://www.letrasperdidas.galeon.com/categorias.htm).

- Preparing Power Point presentations and writing essays on the project work done and texts read. The presentations are delivered in class both orally and written, and the essays are peer-reviewed and discussed in class before they are handed in to the teacher for feedback and grading.

- Starting research activities: preparation of abstracts of papers and papers in Spanish for students' research work conferences (again, the Internet is used as a source of materials for preparing papers).

- Subscribing to and daily reading of Internet news bulletins (in Spanish, English, and Ukrainian, such as www.n-economia.com; http://www.periodistadigital.com/; http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/news/; http://www.cnn.com/espanol/; www.terra.com/noticias/;http://5tv.com.ua/newsline/).The bulletins are regularly discussed in the Spanish language during class.

- Working with the English language newsletter *Visual Link* (www.spanishprograms.com/weekly_newsletter.htm) that specializes in supplying cultural information, concerning peculiarities of culture-specific behavior characteristic of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans. Once again, all information collected is used for classroom presentations and discussions in Spanish.

- Getting prepared to take the international test/exam in Spanish – *DELE Nivel Inicial* (Pre-intermediate Level) in the second year of learners' Spanish studies (after the second semester of such studies) and *DELE Nivel Intermedio* (Intermediate Level) in the third year (after the fourth semester of their Spanish studies). The taking of these international tests/exams is not mandatory as students themselves decide whether or not they need to do so and whether they can afford

it financially. Should they choose to do so, however, students may consult such Internet sites as http://www.cvc.cervantes.es/aula/dele/ and http://diplomas.cervantes.es.

The advanced stage (from the first semester of the fourth year of study until and including the first semester of the fifth year of study that completes the course – three semesters). Students continue the work started at the preceding stage. In this stage, however, the difficulty of the language and content matter increases dramatically and the Internet learning sites are replaced with sites designed for native speakers of Spanish such as http://www.lenguaje.com/enlaces/enlaces.php, http://www.jergasdehablahispana.org/, http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/, and http://www.clubcultura.com/.

Internet-assisted training (http://www.cvc.cervantes.es/aula/dele/ds/default.htm) for the advanced level international test/exam *DELE Nivel Superior* is started. Project work and other kinds of learning activities become more and more individualized so that students can follow their individualized programs of studies during three semesters. Such individualized programs involve the use of different Internet sites by different students in accordance with their individual assignments, projects, and the like. This is not to suggest that group work becomes obsolete. On the contrary, students continue to collaborate with one another on their project work, and the individual results, presentations, and essays written are always discussed by the whole class. At this stage, some student work begins to be published on the World Wide Web.

It should be noted that at all stages a great number of other English sites not cited here are used as well, to supply students with sufficient reading materials and information for preparing their projects and presentations. The description above aims to show that the developed procedures strictly follow the seven guidelines articulated in the *Rationale* in order to obtain maximum results in teaching/learning.

Preliminary Results

In this pilot study we were primarily interested in the development of learners' reading skills since the approach developed was reading-oriented. To ensure this end, in February 2006 of the 2005/2006 academic year all of the study's participating students were given a test in reading as an assessment designed to measure their reading comprehension.

Group A of the third year of study was given a reading test taken in whole from the 2005 official international exam in Spanish – *DELE Nivel Intermedio*. Students had 50 minutes (just as in the official *DELE Nivel Intermedio* exam) to read four texts and complete the four test tasks: to answer three *False/True* questions (first text) and three multiple-choice questions (to each of the remaining three texts).

The same test was also administered to an additional group of third-year students learning Spanish as L3. That group (called Group A1) was practically identical to Group A in number of students (also 11), age, distribution by sex, and absence of any experience in learning Spanish before the university course. The only difference between Group A1 and Group A was the absence of the Internet, that is, in Group A1 the Internet was not a part of students' Spanish studies. As a result, all the inter-group differences in completing the reading test could safely be ascribed to the presence or absence of Internet-assisted language learning in students' work.

The same approach was used for testing in February 2006 the reading skills of the students in the fourth year of study (Group B). The learners were given a reading test taken from the 2005 official international exam in Spanish – *DELE Nivel Superior*. The test requires reading four texts of different genres with a high level of content and language

difficulties. The comprehension tasks are three multiple-choice questions (first three texts) totaling nine questions and ten question-and-answer-matching tasks (fourth text) totaling 19 tasks. The allotted time is 60 minutes.

Again, as with the third-year students, the same test was administered to seven students (just like in Group B). The difference between these two groups was the total absence of Internet assistance in the Spanish studies of students from Group B1. The results of testing are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Reading Test Results in Groups A - A1 (*DELE Nivel Intermedio*) and B - B1 (*DELE Nivel Superior*)

Group	Number of correct answers (out of 12) for the group – mean figure	Time for doing the test (out of 50 minutes) – mean figure
A	10.38	34.38
A1	8.89	48.12
	Number of correct answers (out of 19) for the group – mean figure	Time for doing the test (out of 60 minutes) – mean figure
B	14.8	50
B1	8.5	60

Yet another test carried out in February 2006 only with the third-year students from Group A and control Group A1 was a listening test from the 2005 *DELE Nivel Intermedio* exam. Only two texts (out of four) present in the materials of the 2005 *DELE Nivel Intermedio* exam were used. After listening to the first text, students had to answer three false/true questions. After listening to the second text, they were expected to answer three multiple-choice questions. The allotted time of completing the test was limited to the listening time set by the tape (15 minutes). As a result, the students had no opportunity to rethink their answers or to correct them following the expiration of the listening time. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Listening Test Results in Groups A - A1 (*DELE Nivel Intermedio*)

Group	Number of correct answers (out of 6) for the group – mean figure
A	5.67
A1	5.67

The data cited above are not sufficient for drawing definite conclusions since the number of students is too small to conduct a quantitative data analysis. Nevertheless, for the purposes of our pilot study here, the 'early' results obtained clearly indicate two tendencies. The first tendency shows that the students who for five (the third year of study) or seven (the fourth year of study) semesters had their Internet-assisted instruction in Spanish as L3 achieved considerably better results in their reading skills development than those students who did not enjoy the benefits of such instruction. The students of the first category had better results in reading test tasks and required less time for completing these tasks – a clear indication, in our opinion, of the higher level of development in target language reading skills.

One more positive qualitative conclusion that can be drawn here is the positive impact the Internet-assisted instruction had on students' overall motivation. Qualitative data analysis of both classroom observations and follow-up student interviews confirmed this tenable conclusion. Not only did the Internet-assisted instruction increase students' motivation, it

helped them become much more interested in learning the Spanish language, stimulated them to be thorough and systematic in their work, and also stimulated taking up tasks additional to those that were suggested by the teacher. All students interviewed claimed that such a level of interest and motivation was directly linked to the Internet-assisted work they had to perform. The motivation effect was also partially due to students' involvement with English-based Internet resources in their Spanish studies. In addition, such data strongly support the introduction of Internet-assisted courses into studies of L3 at tertiary schools.

As concerns the listening skills development, the listening test results (see Table 2) did not demonstrate any advantages in the experimental Group A as compared to the control Group A1 that did not enjoy Internet-assisted instruction. This confirms the suitability of the suggested approach that makes the Internet-assisted instruction mostly reading-oriented. As a result, the development of target language reading skills is substantially accelerated. Conversely, listening skills can be developed successfully even without employing Internet technologies and especially when audio and video materials for listening abound, a claim which we intend to pursue more fully in our upcoming experimental study.

As stated earlier, it was not our intention in this pilot study to test our learners' L3 speaking and writing skills development. Nevertheless, there appears to be some 'early' evidence in support of such skills development. More specifically, in 2005, nine of the eleven students in Group A took the international exam *DELE Nivel Inicial*. They were in their second year of studying Spanish at that time. During the same period, five of the seven students in Group B took the international exam *DELE Nivel Intermedio*. They were in their third year of study at that time. The final and highest level of the *DELE* international exam, *DELE Nivel Superior*, was planned for the students from Group A for the 2007/2008 academic year and for the students from Group B for the 2006/2007 academic year when these groups were approaching the end of their courses in Spanish.

In both cases, the exams results for Groups A and B were high in all aspects: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and the use of Spanish. In *DELE Nivel Inicial*, two students out of nine got 91/92 points out of 100 (practically the highest grades) for the exam, four got from 84 to 87 points (very good grades), and three got from 73 to 76 points ('passing' grades). The results in *DELE Nivel Intermedio* were similar. Two students out of five got 90/91 points out of 100 (the highest grades) for the exam, one student got a very good grade of 87 points, and two students got 'passing' grades from 71 to 74 points. These results, we believe, attest to the high development of all communication skills, including speaking and writing.

The situation was quite different in Groups A1 and B1 where there had been no Internet-assisted instruction, though students were being prepared for taking international exams in Spanish just like in Groups A and B. None of the students from these groups took either *DELE Nivel Inicial* or *DELE Nivel Intermedio* exams because they were not recommended to do so by their teachers. The reason was the insufficient level of learners' speaking and writing skills, though, as the interviewed teachers indicated later on, the development of students' reading and listening skills could allow them to take a relevant *DELE* exam.

Given the above, an early conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that Internet-assisted instruction accelerates the development of speaking and writing skills. Again, caution should be used here as this conclusion, based on indirect data, can be considered only as preliminary, demonstrating *the tendency* but not a direct *cause-and-effect relationship* awaiting further experimental evidence.

Notwithstanding such early evidence, it can be asserted with confidence that the results obtained in this pilot study offer a preliminary (pre-experimental) confirmation of the positive influence of Internet-assisted L3 (Spanish) learning on the development of students'

target language communication skills: reading, speaking, and writing. Conversely, this pilot study failed to reveal a positive influence on the development of listening skills. This finding may be attributed to the fact that in Internet-assisted language studies organized by us, the audio and video materials provided by the Internet were not used regularly due to their high cost. It is logical to postulate, however, that had we made regular use of such materials, a positive influence on the development of listening skills could be expected. Again, further experimental study is required to confirm such hypothesis. In the meantime, however, what can be concluded with confidence from the results obtained in this pilot study is the positive influence that the Internet-assisted instruction (which was designed following the guidelines and the approach/procedures discussed in this article) exerts on students' progress in learning Spanish as L3.

Speaking more generally about what regards the study's first focus (*How to make the best use of authentic reading materials provided by the Internet to improve the development of learners' overall communication skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) in Spanish as their L3*), it may be assumed that the approach/procedures developed for the use of Internet-provided reading materials had a positive influence on learners' overall Spanish communication skills development.

As regards the second focus of the study (*How to make profitable use of students' L2 (English) and mine the wealth of the English Internet resources to improve the learning of Spanish as L3, in particular the development of students' general skills in using the Internet for language studies*), the answer is also positive. First, it is only a result of the English-based Internet resources that we were able to amass enough sites and materials to let students do all their planned tasks. For instance, students could not find on the Internet enough materials in Spanish to provide for all their needs while preparing their projects and presentations. Second, students were themselves highly positive about using English-based Internet resources for their Spanish studies. Not only did this approach help them to access a sufficient number of materials for their projects and presentations in Spanish which they would otherwise have lacked, it also afforded them ample opportunities for reading practice in English, which resulted in improved English reading skills. Naturally, such positive impact on learners' English reading skills development needs to be confirmed experimentally (and we intend to do so next), but the fact remains: students enthusiastically support the effectiveness of the approach/procedures developed for the use of Internet-provided reading materials. Finally, no additional evidence was needed to confirm the positive effect on the development of learners' skills of using the Internet for language studies. This conclusion was easily drawn from students' continuous practice in using the Internet resources (dual immersion).

Conclusion

In this article, an Internet-assisted instructional reading approach of L3 (Spanish) on the basis of L2 (English) was discussed following seven distinct guidelines. The results obtained in this pilot study permit some early conclusions to be made in that they assert that the suggested approach was of considerable efficacy as concerns the development of learners' target L3 reading, speaking, and writing skills, as well as their motivation to learn. The approach developed also contributed to improving the L2 reading skills while providing the L3 studies with the wealth of L2-based reading materials for conducting project and presentation tasks in L3. Further studies will be required, however, before any firm conclusions can be drawn. This pilot study is a first step in that direction.

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